

## Intersections

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### From the Editor

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Blessings,  
Sue Edison-Swift  
Assistant Director, ELCA Colleges and Universities

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Many of our campuses are or recently have been abuzz with conversations about vocation. I would like to think that this is not entirely due to the hope of winning millions in the Lilly lottery. If vocation is an idea that is at or near the heart of a Lutheran understanding of education then it should be something we converse about whether or not the conversation is funded. It should just be part of who we are and what we do.

As I listened to the presentations included in this issue the question was raised for me, "What have we learned from these Lilly funded programs that can be applied to those of us who have not been funded? Is there some way to share the gift, to pass the learning on to institutions that have little or no budget for such programs and activities?" From the presentations included in this issue I have drawn a conclusion that I think is applicable to all of our ELCA colleges and universities; we need to encourage and enable more conversations about vocation at all of our institutions. (1) Faculty need to be engaged in conversation about vocation, about what moves us to do what we do, and what moves us to care about the kind of job we do, about what we feel called to do and how that informs our work. What kind of money would it take to encourage such conversation? Twenty dollars will buy enough wine to get such a conversation started. When I retire I plan to leave a wine endowment to my university, with the proviso that faculty will converse as they drink it. *In vino veritas*. (2) Students need to be engaged in such conversation. Students grow in proportion to the significant conversations they have. They come to college with culture-shaped ideas about the nature of success, about finding a good job, and about how all that is related to the learning they will do in college. We need to talk about such things in an encouraging and critical way, not just once during orientation, but over and over again in classes and out. It's probably the most important conversation they can have while in college, yet we often make no special effort to encourage and enable it. What would this cost? Nothing more than we are spending now. (3) We need to encourage our alums to talk about vocation, to share stories about people they've encountered who lived out a vocational approach to their work, their situation, their daily responsibilities. We need to hear the voices of our alums, and to be informed by what they have to tell us about what they've learned and from whom they've learned it. We might be significantly surprised to find out where the lessons of vocation are learned. What would it cost us to initiate such conversations? Very little, and in the long run nothing. An institution that shows some interest in its alums will find that interest more than returned.

We decided to print an issue of *Intersections* that's a good deal "fatter" than usual in order to publish together these pieces all focused on vocation. Let us hear what you think about this issue and about the possibility of other single topic issues in the future.

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